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ABSTRACT

As part of a project to improve professional development for adult basic and literacy educators in Pennsylvania, a literature review was conducted of studies of professional competencies needed by adult educators. Extensive review of previous studies showed that hundreds of competencies had been identified. Some states also had generated their own lists of competencies for adult educators. From the review, detailed descriptive lists of professional competencies for teachers in the areas of adult literacy, adult basic education, and English as a second language were generated for potential use in implementing a formalized system for promoting documentation of such competencies among adult basic and literacy educators in Pennsylvania. Competencies were listed in four general areas: (1) adult learning in the context of the educational program and the community; (2) assessment of learner needs and of progress toward goals; (3) curriculum materials in content areas; and (4) instructional process and practice. A process for validating these competencies was documented. (Contains 28 references.) (KC)

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Adult Basic and Literacy Education Staff Competencies:

A Literature Review and Recommendations for Developing a Competency-Based Staff Development Program in Pennsylvania

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2

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Contents

Introduction 3

A. Research 6

A Review of the Literature 6

Competencies for ESL Teachers 25

Content of ABLE Teacher Training Programs 26

Volunteer Preservice Training Content 33

ESL Teacher Training Content 33

Assessing Validity of Training Content 34

B. Interpretation 35

Factors Complicating Staff Development 35

Conclusions 37

C. Recommendations 39

Competencies for Adult Basic and Literacy Education Staff in Pennsylvania 41

A Validation Process 45

A Competency-Based Staff Development Plan 46

Bibliography 49

Introduction

To assist in forming a basis for a list of measurable competencies for adult basic and literacy education staff in Pennsylvania, we reviewed the literature on ABE/literacy/ESL staff competencies. Intermittently for several decades, researchers, policy makers, and adult education practitioners have in various ways examined the issue of the competencies (here defined as demonstrable knowledge, skills, and behaviors) which a teacher of adults in basic education, literacy, and/or English as a second language programs should be able to demonstrate in order to function effectively, i.e. to maximize learner outcomes, though little data exists on the connection between adult educator staff development (competency based or not) and practice improvement.

Lists of adult educator staff competencies have emerged from college courses, such as those taught by Malcolm Knowles at North Carolina State University; from large-scale studies based at the University of Missouri - Kansas City; from individual states, such as at The Center for Adult Education at Miami-Dade Community College in Florida and the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Department for Adult Education and Literacy; from doctoral studies, such as "A National Cross-Time Study of Mocker's 1974 Knowledges, Behaviors and Attitudes for Adult Basic Education Teachers" (Leahy, 1992); and from local programs, such as Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit in Pennsylvania (1995).

Most of the lists were developed through some form of the Delphi process:

> "a procedure, initially developed by the Rand Corporation, that involves the repeated, or iterative, consulting with a number of informed persons, asking them to individually assess a specified set of statements. The responses of all participants are assembled and returned to each participant, inviting them to consider their individual response in light of the total response; thus moving toward consensus by the group members. Revised estimates are re-circulated to the participants for further analysis and so on. The procedure can vary considerably, but its primary utility is that it produces a well-considered consensus of the perceptions of a plurality of informed persons without injecting the bias of leadership influence, face-to-face confrontation, or group dynamics. Respondents as individuals are expected to clarify their own thinking, and the final decisions ... will tend to converge by narrowing the range of estimates of responses ... A pure Delphi method would have the informed persons develop the list of original statements from which consensus is derived." (Smith, 1976)

Several of the competency lists we examined are long and detailed—containing as many as 291 separate competencies covering the full range of an ABE teacher's probable responsibilities (Mocker, 1974b). For example, within each competency category ("what") there were five to seven subcompetencies ("how"). Some competency lists went as deeply as three levels of detail. The rationale for this much detail was "to minimize a major weakness of many CBAE studies, namely, the target population being too broad" (Smith, 1976). On the other hand, although more levels of supporting detail may better target

specific skills, the passage of time and the realities of limited ABE funding indicate that for planning purposes, staff development programs based on too much detail can also complicate measurement of post-training outcomes in a field in which follow-up of any sort is difficult enough. The need for detail appears most valid when, like some of the lists we looked at, competencies are delineated for groups such as administrators vs. teachers, ABE vs. ESL teachers, part-time vs. full-time teacher, and/or beginning vs. experienced teachers. It is feasible that many of the competencies on such Mocker-type lists may be clustered into a much smaller number of curriculum areas.

Many of the same major competencies appear on all or most of the lists; some appeared on as few as one list, particularly those items which Delphi participants gave lower rankings, those which were of more minute detail, and those which appear to reflect trends in educational philosophy that have since shifted out of vogue. Most studies of adult education staff competencies are based on the seminal Mocker list.

In some cases, the purpose for identifying adult basic and literacy staff competencies was unclear. In some cases, the purpose was to establish a basis for a competency-based staff development plan. In a few cases, the purpose was to establish a set of criteria for teaching certification. Based on our review, it appears that none of these long-term staff development goals have been ever been carried through to a true competency-based staff development program, with the possible exception of a statewide plan in progress in Kentucky.

Although some states require that their paid adult basic education (ABE) teachers hold either adult education certification or an adult education endorsement to their teaching certificates in other disciplines (Kutner, et al., 1991), Pennsylvania has historically rejected a certification requirement. However, this state has never completely rejected the notion of holding its ABE teachers to some sort of standard; that standard has just never been clearly defined. A study for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania called "Feasibility of Requiring and Delivering Certification for ABE Teachers in Pennsylvania" (Cope, 1984) concluded:

> "Standards are needed if ABE educators are going to be able to prepare competent practitioners for the teaching profession and to guarantee that the graduates are competent ... there are a number of studies available on ... competencies that ABE teachers should possess. These studies have resulted in the development of clearly outlined lists of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Further research is needed to operationalize these competencies for instruction use. At this time, the literature does not fully support the establishment of a certification system based on competencies. On the other hand, neither does the literature discourage such development. Literature has also indicated that there are two key elements to effective teaching: the teacher's ability to interact with student in the affective domain, and the teacher's ability to use the instructional mode of individualized instruction. Further research is needed in both of these areas."

Note that most of the works cited in this report are from the 1970s and a few from the early 1980s. This was the "APL era"—the period around following the 1975 Adult Performance Level study (University of Texas at Austin) during which competency-based education (CBE) for adult education students was at its peak. It naturally followed that competency-based staff development was also receiving attention during that time. Interestingly, except for Leahy, the more recent studies produced briefer, more general lists of competencies that would probably form the basis of a flexible competency-based staff development program.

Besides reading research reports, we contacted, through our state literacy resource centers, all the state literacy resource centers via the U.S. Department of Education's Dial-In online network, requesting current information on the use of staff competencies in their states. Through this means we received a response from only one state, Kentucky. We also wrote to 26 state literacy resource centers (including one that covers most of the New England states), selected on the basis of evidence that competency-based staff development approaches may have been in place in those states, according to Pelavin studies (Tibbetts, et al., 1991). We received responses from only nine states through that second communiqué (California, Colorado, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia). Of these, some confusion existed between competency-based teacher training and training teachers to teach in competency-based education programs. Also, what some states defined as *competencies* were actually lists of *topics* derived from needs-assessment surveys; they were not stated in terms of behaviors, knowledges, values, etc., as "competencies" generally are. Of the states that responded to our inquiries, only Virginia provided a list of adult-education endorsements to the teaching certificate.

This report will approach the topic of staff competencies in three phases:

A. Research

1. Examination and summary of the ABE staff competency studies which we were able to secure through a literature search.
2. Examination of the implementation of competency-based staff development, i.e. the content of existing staff development programs based on competencies to varying degrees.

B. Interpretation

1. A review of major factors complicating staff development efforts and the content of competency-based staff development efforts in particular.

2. Conclusions: a summary of competencies needed by adult basic and literacy educators, as derived from the literature.

C. Recommendations

A recommended process for validation of a set of staff competencies and further action on developing a competency-based staff development program for adult basic and literacy educators in Pennsylvania.

A. Research

A Review of the Literature

We first examined the rationale for a competency-based staff development approach for adult basic and literacy education (ABLE) practitioners.

A recent paper called "The Professionalism of the Teacher of Adult Literacy Education" asserts:

> "... the professionalism of the adult literacy teacher should be viewed as a process involving movement along a continuum of potential knowledge and skill-based standards that are necessary for teachers to acquire in order to meet students' needs. This suggests that there will be no final answer to establishing appropriate and effective teaching standards in adult literacy education. However, whether debate focuses on the establishment of initial standards or the revision of existing ones, it is imperative that there be fewer unstated, and therefore unexamined, premises dominating the arguments." (Shanahan, et al., 1994)

An expanded view of staff development is exemplified in the Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Project (ALPIP) in Philadelphia, which inherently links professional growth to program improvement. This "research community" of ABLE practitioners approaches "inquiry-centered staff development as a promising direction for rethinking practice and research and for generating knowledge from a field-based perspective." (Lytle, et al., 1992)

> "... its nature and content are determined by research on how programs improve rather than by research on training teachers to implement a set of effective teaching practices ... Thus, rather than altering participants' practices, beliefs and understandings or training them in predetermined skills and knowledge [the deficit model], the staff development participants are active constructors of their own professional practice who acquire and generate knowledge as members of educational communities rather than as individuals. Instead of beginning with specific practices, staff development programs can begin with teachers' thinking about their own work and can aim to reshape work environments to enable reflective and collaborative dialogue and to give teachers power to act on their conclusions."

Underlying the work of the ALPIP group were practitioners' questions regarding several complex areas (ibid.); restated, this list could be interpreted as competencies which the group desired to possess:

- How to teach (how to work with adult learners in reading and writing, how to work with heterogeneous groups, how to assess learning)
- Self-evaluation of a current practice or role (questions about the gap between what a teacher wants to happen and what actually does, the role of white teachers in the African-American community, what constitutes adequate practice, who establishes standards)
- Programs and program administration (opportunities to compare program models and philosophies, systems for evaluating instructors and instruction, strategies to evaluate programs, approaches to program-based staff development)
- Concepts, ideas, or issues (current research in writing or learning disabilities, debates around the role of phonics instruction in reading, the various meanings of learner-centeredness, the conflicting or contradictory priorities of various funding streams)
- Goals, policies, and politics (inter-program politics; race, class, and gender issues; purposes and conflicting beliefs about literacy teaching and learning; relationships between classwork and the community)

But at least as early as the 1950s, the matter of what knowledge and skills an adult educator needs in order to function effectively has received attention, most notably by Knowles in his *Informal Adult Education* (1950) and *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy versus Pedagogy* (1970, 1980). As a professor of adult and community college education at North Carolina State University, Knowles offered a brief list of competencies for the adult educator (not specifically adult basic education) to his students and invited them to suggest additional items. That list is as follows:

The adult educator:

- understands the role adult education has played in American society in the past and is playing in the present; and he has aspirations regarding its role in the future;
- has broad knowledge of the present scope and trends of adult education as a field of social practice in terms of its aims, agencies, content, personnel, programs, methods and materials, and operational problems;
- understands and is interested in the concerns and issues affecting the adult education field;
- has a deep insight into the relationship between the education of youth and the education of adults;
- understands the basic process of adult education;
- has a broad overview knowledge of the research that has been done in the field;
- understands the existing theories about the psychology of adult learning;
- has a basic understanding of the adult education movements in other countries.

McClellan (1975) partially based "A Study of the Competencies Unique to the Educators of Adults in the Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System" on a similar brief list which Knowles had supplied her.

The McClellan study classified competencies into four areas: *Relationship with the Adult Learner, Program Coordination, Relationship with Peers and Community,* and *Evaluation.* Because the area of Program Coordination mainly concerned administrative matters, we here list only those competencies from the other three areas, in rank order of importance to McClellan's survey respondents:

Relationship with the Adult Learner

- Show respect for adult learner
- Reinforce adult learner for achievement
- Understand the point of view of adult learner
- Display a genuine enthusiasm
- Communicate with adult learner in an open way
- Encourage new interests for adult learners
- Understand the problems an adult learner might have
- Aid an adult learner by using appropriate guidance techniques
- Respond to spontaneous adult learner interests
- Provide opportunities for adult learners to share their vocational interests
- Show empathy through patience and tactfulness
- Develop good relationships with adult learners

Relationship with Peers and Community

- Acknowledge professional help from peers
- Assist peers when possible
- Develop good relations with community service personnel
- Participate in community affairs
- Participate in school affairs

Evaluation

- Identify evaluation procedures to be used by adult learners
- Plan for adult learner input for self-evaluation
- Plan for self-evaluation to be used by adult learner
- Plan for adult learner evaluation of program

- Self-evaluation of educator's teaching methods and their effectiveness
- Plan for evaluation by supervisor
- Develop a strategy for evaluating adult program

McClellan compared her summary list of prioritized competencies to a list which had been developed at the University of Northern Iowa. The two were significantly parallel. The items being compared were as follows, paraphrased and in descending rank order:

Teachers of adults should:

- seek to identify and utilize the talents and experience of each adult student.
- provide individual recognition to adult students for their personal accomplishments.
- become more familiar with techniques for teaching adults.
- have a better understanding of the overall picture of adult education.
- have their teaching effectiveness evaluated by adult students.
- be competent in the area they teach, but the most important requirement for effective adult teaching is "empathy."
- have opportunities to share ideas and voice concerns.
- acquire better counseling and guidance techniques.
- provide a fairly unstructured learning environment.

It should be noted that the above statements are not "competencies" in every case.

Also notable is that in retrospect many of the points on the McClellan list seem quite broad and general. This may be due to the process by which they were derived and/or because with the hindsight of over 20 years, they appear somewhat naïve in the context of adult basic and literacy education today.

At the same time as the McClellan study Mocker, Zinn, and Peebles (together and separately) were beginning to conduct their seminal studies on ABE staff competencies, in which ABE teachers in various locations were asked to rank-prioritize lists of "knowledges, behaviors, and attitudes appropriate for ABE teachers" (Mocker, 1974b). The original 173-item "Adult Basic Education Teacher Competency Inventory" (Mocker, 1974a) expanded to a list of 291 competencies (Mocker, 1974b) that was used in the first major ranking study with 234 ABE teachers and administrators in 33 states. Practitioners ranked subsequent Mocker-based lists in studies conducted in several individual states and Puerto Rico (Zinn, 1974; Zinn, 1975; Peebles, 1975). A number of other studies were based on Mocker's model as well.

Comparison of Mocker-based studies in Iowa (Zinn, 1974), Idaho (Zinn, 1975), and Utah (Peebles, 1975) indicate similar rankings of competencies. All of these studies rank-ordered teacher's perception of need of the competencies and labeled each competency item as falling into one of four categories: *Curriculum, ABE Learner, Scope and Goal of Adult Education,* and *Instructional Process*. In addition, the Iowa study divided each category of competencies into the areas of *Knowledge, Behavior,* and *Attitude*. The Utah study also separated out Adult High School (AHS) teacher competencies. The most direct comparison that can be made among these studies is a comparison of the Idaho and Utah studies' 20 top-rated competencies. Remarkable is that 12 of the top 20 competencies—derived from an original inventory of 170 items—appeared on both lists; these are indicated with a check mark:

Idaho:

ABE teachers are able to:

√	1.	differentiate between teaching children and teaching adults.
√	2.	use humor in the classroom.
√	3.	reinforce positive attitudes toward learning.
√	4.	maintain a clean, orderly classroom.
√	5.	use classrooms and other settings which provide for a comfortable learning environment.
√	6.	develop a climate that will encourage learners to participate.
	7.	make daily lesson plans.
	8.	demonstrate belief in innovation and experimentation by willingness to try new approaches in the classroom.
√	9.5.	develop effective working relationships with learners.
√	9.5.	maintain discipline in the classroom.
√	11.	communicate effectively with learners.
√	12.	establish a basis for mutual respect with learners.
√	13.5.	adjust teaching to accommodate individual and group characteristics.
	13.5.	identify the major topics and concepts of each subject he/she teaches.
√	15.	plan independent study with learners.
	16.	devise instructional strategies that will develop within the learners a sense of confidence.
	17.	coordinate and supervise classroom activities.
	18.	provide continuous feedback to learners on their educational progress.
	19.	adjust program to respond to the changing needs of the learner.

20. demonstrate commitment to lifelong learning by participating in continuing education activities.

Utah:

ABE teachers are able to:

√ 1. differentiate between teaching children and teaching adults.
√ 2. develop a climate that will encourage learners to participate.
3. operate duplicating equipment and instructional hardware.
√ 4. maintain discipline in the classroom.
√ 5. reinforce positive attitudes toward learning.
√ 6. communicate effectively with learners.
√ 7. develop effective working relationships with learners.
8. demonstrate commitment to lifelong learning by participating in continuing education activities.
9. place learners at their instructional level.
√ 10. use humor in the classroom.
√ 11. use classrooms and other settings which provide for a comfortable learning environment.
12. coordinate and supervise classroom activities.
13. determine those principles of learning which apply to adults.
√ 14. establish a basis for mutual respect with learners.
15. adjust rate of instruction to the learners' rate of progress.
16. recognize the potentiality for growth in learners.
√ 17. maintain a clean, orderly classroom
√ 18. adjust teaching to accommodate individual and group characteristics.
19. summarize and review the main points of a less or demonstration.
√ 20. plan independent study with learners.

Another study conducted in Iowa for the express purpose of developing "as specific a list of competencies as possible" for the Adult Education Section of the Department of Public Instruction also originated with Mocker's list 291 competencies rather than from a pure Delphi approach, which would have generated even the initial list of competencies from the Delphi participants (Smith, 1976). This study additionally produced a list of administrator competencies, derived from various sources, not the Mocker inventory. Focusing on the teacher competencies, the study retained Mocker's four major categories of competencies: *Scope and Goal of Adult Education, Curriculum, ABE Learner,* and

Instructional Process. The competencies were also categorized by student level, either ABE or advanced level, and by level of teacher experience. The resulting list greatly refines the Mocker list, though there still appears to be some redundancy and overlapping of competencies. Here is Smith's list, considerably paraphrased and condensed from his list of 136 and without breaking down the items, as Smith did, into the areas of knowledge, skill, and beliefs/attitudes and into entry/beginning and intermediate/advanced):

Necessary Competencies for Adult Basic Education Teachers (Smith, 1976)

Scope and goal of adult education
- knowledge of the theory and practice of teaching in adult education
- knowledge of philosophical bases and issues of adult education
- awareness of community resources
- recognition of difference between teaching children and teaching adults
- knowledge of student recruitment methods
- skill in use of public relations techniques
- ability to use information from professional literature
- belief that innovation and experimentation are necessary and desirable for growth of adult education
- development of professional commitment

Curriculum
- knowledge of the elements of effective oral and written communication
- knowledge of practical mathematical skills that ABE students need
- knowledge of the primary components necessary for teaching reading
- knowledge of math as a developmental skill
- ability to evaluate and select adult curriculum materials
- identification of the major topics, characteristics, and concepts of each subject area
- skill in organizing a plan of instruction that demonstrates appropriate sequence, continuity, and integration in relation to learner objectives

ABE learner
- awareness of the impact of learners' prior educational experiences, motivations for participation
- recognition of individual and cultural differences and varying values among students
- knowledge of psychosocial problems of the adult student
- patience for repetitive processes for slow learners
- ability to identify and develop level of student's self-concept
- belief that adult learners should not be treated like children
- ability to motivate students
- mutual respect between teacher and students

Instructional process
- knowledge of methods and materials for the subject(s) being taught
- ability to design and maintain an effective learning environment
- demonstrate procedures for determining instructional levels of students
- familiarity with the more widely used and usable ABE materials
- awareness of community agencies that could assist students
- ability to effectively communicate with adults
- ability to use humor in the classroom
- skill in planning individualized instruction and adapt curriculum for each student
- ability to select appropriate instructional approaches to remedy deficiencies in reading
- ability to provide practice activities and practical applications that reinforce classroom instruction
- ability to help students become self-directed learners

- ability to help students use the methods and materials of problem solving
- ability to locate, interpret, and apply research and new developments to improve teaching
- ability to evaluate and report on student progress
- ability to conduct follow-up studies of students

In 1991 Leahy revisited Mocker's original inventory of staff competencies by conducting a national survey of 687 local ABE program administrators and teachers to rank the original list in light of the passage of time. Leahy's comparison of the 1974 and 1991 rankings showed remarkable similarity. The conclusion was that "in spite of the many changes which have occurred in ABE and the increasing complexity of the field, Mocker's competencies are relevant to present day practice" (Leahy, 1992). However, an analysis of the differences between the two studies' results indicated several areas which scored notably higher rankings in the later study: testing and assessment, the teaching of reading, the teaching of math, knowledge about the scope and impact of the adult literacy problem, and knowledge about state and federal legislation designed to address the problem. These differences reflect a significant shift of certain priorities in the field, due to various factors. A summary of this study is attached to this document.

Nevertheless, a notable limitation of the Leahy study is that it used the Mocker list in its original form; it did not update the list in any way to reflect current theory, practice, or terminology. The researcher acknowledges that "new competencies need to be identified and, if appropriate, added to the list ... no mention is made of learning disabled adults ... workplace literacy, family literacy, computer literacy, computer assisted instruction or computer technology in education" (ibid.).

Bunning (1976) examined "Skills and Knowledges for the Adult Educator: A Delphi Study" but did not employ the Mocker model inventory. Indeed, Bunning's study was not focused on adult basic education teachers specifically (it should be noted that none of the literature from the 1970s uses the term "literacy"). Overall, the items on Bunning's list of competencies would apply to teachers of any age group or subject area except for those pertaining to knowledge of the "nature of the adult learner," "principles of adult education," "psychology of the adult," and "the broad field of adult education as it relates to the individual, the community, and/or society."

Burrichter and Gardner (1977) conducted an Adult Education Act staff development project in Florida based on a preceding study in that state to identify competencies for adult educators in general, i.e. no correlations were made between practitioner responses and their employment status or years of experience. Beginning with a draft listing 151 competency statements, a group adult educators refined and reduced the list to 88 statements in five categories: *Community Relations, Instructional Skills, Understanding the*

Learner, Interpersonal Relationships, and *Curriculum Knowledge and Planning*. Another group of adult educators reduced that list to 69 "essential" competencies. The resulting list was divided into the categories of *Instructional Skills, Interpersonal Relationships, Curriculum Design, Perspectives of Learning,* and *Community Development*. In this reader's opinion, the list offers some bases for development of objectively measurable staff competencies but as written most of the statements appear quite immeasurable. That list is as follows:

Instructional Skills

Assess students' learning needs:

- Diagnose entry knowledge and skill of adult learners for a given set of instructional objectives.
- Use performance-based assessment procedures.
- Provide for learner self-evaluation.
- Recognize symptoms of physical deficiencies that may hinder performance.
- Provide continuous feedback to learners on their education progress.
- Keep records of class and individual progress.

Use relevant and effective instructional methods:

- Communicate in a coherent and logical manner.
- Use sequential, relevant short-range instructional objectives.
- Assist adult learners in development of problem-solving skills.
- Apply instructional techniques which use the talents, abilities, and experience of group members.
- Assist adults in the development and use of learning skills.
- Provide practical activities for learning.
- Adjust instructional techniques to meet immediate learning needs.
- Promote self-directed learning.

Interpersonal Relationships

Develop effective working relationships with adult learners:

- Establish a basis for mutual respect with adult learners.
- Interact constructively with adults.
- Communicate effectively with adult learners.
- Use reinforcement techniques.
- Apply principles of group dynamics.
- Respond positively to constructive criticism by making appropriate changes.
- Observe adult learners expressing their ideas freely.

Exhibit behavior reflecting a feeling for the dignity and worth of individuals:

- Accept comments of adult learners with a positive attitude.
- Solicit comments and expressions of adult learners.
- Relate effectively to people from a variety of cultural, economic, and occupational backgrounds.
- Assist in developing positive self-concepts by designing "success" opportunities for each learner.
- Encourage the learner's growth through supportive communication.

Curriculum Design

Develop and organize curriculum reflecting needs of adult learners:

- Provide curriculum for varying ability levels.
- Identify needed topics and concepts of each subject taught.
- Provide curricula which meets the individual's personal interests.
- Provide curricula which assists adult learners to acquire employment skills.
- Provide curriculum which stimulate a high level of aspiration.
- Provide opportunities for adult learners to participate in the evaluation of curriculum.
- Provide opportunities for adult learners to participate in curriculum development.
- Relate adult development characteristics (sociological, psychological) to curricula selection.

Develop appropriate goals and objectives for adult programs:
- Help adults formulate their goals.
- Construct learning objectives with measurable outcomes.
- Apply adult learning theory to the process of program development.

Perspectives of Learning

Develop conditions which facilitate learning:
- Provide a suitable learning environment.
- Reinforce positive attitudes toward adult learning.
- Assist adult learners to develop positive attitudes towards lifelong learning.
- Relate learning to immediate application.
- Recognize signs of the potential adult dropout.

Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning:
- Participate in adult education staff development programs.
- Read professional literature.
- Enroll in college courses for professional growth.
- Attend conventions and conferences relevant to professional growth.
- Participate actively in professional adult education organizations.

Community Development

Understand the purposes of adult education within the community:
- Understand the role of an adult educator.
- Understand the national and state objectives and services of adult education.
- Explain the role of adult education to both school and community.
- Talk and act enthusiastically about the program.
- Identify the major functions of community agencies which serve the social, educational, and training needs of adult learners.
- Identify potential employment or on-the-job training opportunities within the community.
- Know the social structure and characteristics of the community.
- Use community resources in the classroom.

Assist individual adjustment to the changing nature of our society:
- Invite learners to consider new roles in a changing society.
- Use social skills which assist adult learners in developing a positive self-concept.
- Assist adult learners in acquiring social skills to relate to others.
- Recognize processes involved in community change.

The Burrichter and Gardner report contains the full "Adult Educator Self Assessment Inventory," which allows adult educators to rate themselves on the above statements on a five-point scale. The measure could be a useful instrument, with adaptations, for assessing achievement of staff competencies among adult educators in Pennsylvania.

"An Assessment of the Inservice Training Needs of Part-time ABE Teachers in the State of Washington" (Stafford, 1981) surveyed ABE staff and state authorities regarding training needs, offering a set of 50 items out of which respondents were asked to select the ten most important. Further, responses were correlated to the following subgroups: state-level ABE authorities (N=9), full-time ABE teachers (N=28), part-time ABE teachers (N=126), urban ABE teachers (N=63), rural ABE teachers (N=41), more experienced ABE teachers (N=110), less experienced ABE teachers (N=44), all in the state of Washington. Though not labeled as competencies per se, the "training needs" clearly resemble competency lists developed in other studies and so are reported here in terms of behavioral competencies. In summary, the most frequently cited items, combined for all groups and slightly paraphrased, were abilities as follows:

- Teach reading
- Use individualized instruction techniques
- Apply principles of adult learning
- Conduct ongoing assessment of progress
- Evaluate own teaching effectiveness
- Conduct initial diagnosis of student learning needs
- Raise student's self-concept
- Teach written composition skills
- Help student develop learning goals and personal improvement goals
- Assess student's learning style
- Place students at correct reading level by use of informal reading inventories
- Give feedback to students in an appropriate manner
- Know about other school and community resources for purposes of referral
- Teach practical skills
- Provide special help to students with specific problems affecting learning
- Know practical ways of motivating students
- Learn about the dangers of and remedies for teacher "burnout"
- Be familiar with a wide range of ABE instructional materials
- Manage time effectively
- Know how to make instructional materials
- Develop or find a usable "scope and sequence" for teaching reading to ABE students

The last item exemplifies a teaching strategy that is now mostly out of vogue.

A similar [to Stafford] set of studies was conducted through Texas A&M University, between 1972 and 1981. First, a task force polled ABE teachers regarding competencies and integrated the responses into a comprehensive list. A year later a separate study conducted a

task analysis of more than 1,100 ABE staff in Texas. A group of ABE supervisors then rated those tasks in terms of importance, difficulty to train for, and number of teachers performing each task. A related Delphi study involved 200 Texas ABE teachers in further examining competencies. From all of these related studies a list of 55 competencies was compiled and an instrument for rating the competencies was developed. Ultimately a 22-module learning system for ABE staff was developed to link the competencies to teacher training. Eleven general competency areas were delineated, each with four or five subcompetencies and five or six behavioral statements beneath each subcompetency. The complete list was published in "A Comprehensive Approach to Staff Development: Source Book" (Fellenz, 1981). Here summarized are the 11 main competency areas, slightly paraphrased and not in rank order:

- Build effective interpersonal relationships with the adult learner
- Demonstrate an understanding of the adult learner and adult learning
- Integrate community resources into the adult education program (for purposes of public awareness of ABE programs as well as for the student's role responsibilities and referral purposes)
- Assess adult learners' progress, both formally and informally
- Plan learning activities
- Manage learning activities (using appropriate teaching methods, etc.)
- Evaluate effectiveness of learning activities
- Undertake activities for continual professional development
- Perform appropriate noninstructional tasks (student records, maintaining physical environment, operating equipment, recruitment)
- Identify the concepts, characteristics, and procedures appropriate for teaching general life skills
- Identify the major concepts, characteristics, and procedures appropriate for a specific program area (general program, reading, spelling/grammar, oral and written communication, mathematics, and GED reading, writing, social studies, science, mathematics, and test-taking preparation)

The purpose of "Elements for a Training Design: An Assessment of Competencies for Effective ABE Instructors" (Nunes & Halloran, 1987) was to set out the basis for a competency-based staff development program in Florida. This study set out to answer the question, "What elements should be included in a design for training Adult Basic Education (ABE) instructors?" Though reference is made to previously developed competency lists (Mocker, 1974b; Smith, 1976; Burrichter & Gardner, D., 1978), this project derived its list of "specific skills and competencies" through use of DACUM (Developing A CUrriculUM) and

Delphi processes involving ABE instructors in Florida and elsewhere who had been identified as "successful" or "effective". Because of the study's relative recency and apparently sound organization and reporting methods, it warrants a close look at its results as a model process for designing a similar training plan. Particularly interesting about the final list this study produced is that it was narrowed to those competencies and skills considered "teachable" in the context of a training design.

The first-stage competency list, derived from the "expert" panel of Florida ABE practitioners, is divided into eight categories, not in rank order, reprinted here verbatim:

1. Application of knowledge about the adult learner.
   a. recognizes individual differences.
   b. identifies individual limitations.
   c. recognizes individual vulnerabilities.
   d. recognizes individual needs.
   e. differentiates among individual learning styles.
   f. involves the adult learner in the learning process.
   g. incorporates life experience in teaching process.
   h. accommodates to extracurricular responsibilities of students which may interfere with the learning process.
   i. provides for immediacy of application.
   j. distinguishes between adults and other categories.

2. Personal qualities.
   a. displays patience during the learning process.
   b. displays a willingness to take risks.
   c. maintains an energetic and enthusiastic manner.

3. Application of knowledge in the field.
   a. employs appropriate diagnostic/prescriptive techniques.
   b. groups students according to test results.
   c. uses readability scales to evaluate materials.
   d. employs appropriate evaluative techniques.
   e. elicits feedback.
   f write curriculum for specific needs.
   g. evaluates and adapts materials to the adult learner.
   h. applies adult learning theory to instruction.

4. Teaching techniques.
   a. employs group dynamics.
   b. uses A/V effectively.
   c. combines techniques, as appropriate, for flexibility.
   d. lectures effectively and appropriately.
   e. simplifies, as needed, complex concepts.
   f. relates material to life experience.
   g. elicits feedback.

5. Innovation.
   a. steps out of own perspective as needed.
   b. uses familiar materials in innovative ways.
   c. is familiar with and applies various theories on creativity.

6. Communication/interpersonal skills.
   a. listens actively.

b. expresses self clearly (orally).
c. employs appropriate body language.
d. elicits responses from students.
e. compromises as appropriate.
f. writes effectively.
g. selects correct "register".

7. Professionalism.
   a. follows procedures and policies.
   b. is prepared for classes.
   c. dresses appropriately to the situation.
   d. fulfills duties and responsibilities.
   e. displays leadership.
   f. keeps current in field.
   g. responds appropriately in situations of conflict.
   h. is self-directed.
   i. accepts students as adults.
   j. demonstrates pride in accomplishment.

8. Management/Organization.
   a. monitors and manages the classroom.
   b. manages materials and supplies.
   c. manages time effectively.
   d. plans effective lessons.
   e. manages well in crisis.
   f. prioritizes information, tasks.
   g. foresees consequences and plans for contingencies.

Following use of the Delphi Process with a broader, national sample, the Nunes and Halloran study then produced the following list of "teachable skills," based on the above competencies, or what the researchers believed to be "the elements which must be included in a training design for effective ABE instructors." Appealing about this list is that, while the items are fundamental to sound practice, they are generic enough that any training program incorporating them could still be tailored to the latest research and to currently accepted practices. This list too is reprinted here verbatim.

1. Understanding of the adult learner.
   1.1 is aware of ongoing research on adult development and its relationship to adults as learners.
   1.2 recognizes individual learning styles and correlative teaching methods.
   1.3 understands relationship between life experience of adult learner and need for immediacy of application.
   1.4 incorporates life experience in learning process in order to facilitate immediacy of application.
   1.5 understands the social and professional obligations responsibilities of the adult learner and their impact on educational objectives and performance.

2. Knowledge of field content and methodology.
   2.1 knows content and methods in appropriate field and is capable of adapting these for adult learner.
   2.2 can design and/or implement evaluative procedures which measure participant capabilities and performance.

2.3 can design or implement summative procedures which measure program effectiveness.

3. Employment of teaching techniques.
   3.1 knows variety of teaching/learning techniques and utilized them in appropriate manner.
   3.2 knows function of motivation in learning process and implements appropriate motivational techniques.

4. Communication skills.
   4.1 applies effectively the techniques of active listening.
   4.2 can initiate dialogue and call closure on process.
   4.3 uses appropriate language in oral and written expression.

5. Professionalism.
   5.1 knows policies and procedures and dependably fulfills duties and responsibilities.
   5.2 keeps current in field.
   5.3 accepts criticism and negotiates conflict constructively.
   5.4 maintains professional appearance.

6. Management of learning environment.
   6.1 plans lessons based on learners' needs and content.
   6.2 manages time effectively in terms of preparation and delivery.
   6.3 allocates materials and supplies in an accountable manner.

7. Interpersonal skills.
   7.1 facilitates behavior which enhances self-worth of adult learner by demonstrating understanding, empathy, and patience.
   7.2 demonstrate enthusiasm and can maintain high level of energy through learning process.
   7.3 instills confidence and pride in accomplishments of adult learner.

The New York State Literacy Resource Center sent us the results of "a survey of adult educator competencies conducted several years ago by a consultant to the New York State Education Department" (Fareri, personal correspondence, 1995). Following that process, the Resource Center itself conducted a "statewide adult educator staff development needs assessment," which asked participants to rank a list of topics in order of priority. Staff development activities based on the results are not fully operational at this writing, and the topics are not "competencies" per se; however, we reprint the results here because the study is recent and because the topics, which are more contemporary than the earlier Mocker-type lists, could be translated into the form of competencies.

High Priority Needs

1. Instructional techniques for teaching adults
2. Adult learning styles
3. How to accommodate learning style difference
4. How to set long and short term goals that are realistic
5. Teaching reading to adults
6. Individualizing instruction
7. Developing effective working relationships with adults
8. Developing effective listening and communication skills

9. Developing "real life" teaching materials
10. Assessing adult reading skills
11. Small group instruction techniques
12. Assessment of learning disabilities
13. Planning lessons within the context of students' lives

Medium Priority Needs

1. Evaluation of program effectiveness
2. Basic writing skills for the world of work
3. The adult as learner
4. Employability skills
5. Evaluating learner strengths
6. Life management skills
7. GED preparation
8. Developing critical thinking skills
9. Barriers to adult learning
10. Determining student basic skills needs
11. Writing skills for the GED examination
12. Peer teaching learning activities
13. Cooperative learning techniques
14. Strategies for the "no-growth" student

Medium to Low Priority Needs

1. Assessing career interests and aptitudes
2. Developing program linkages
3. Designing small group activities
4. Motivating the negative learner
5. Culture and life style influences on the adult learner
6. Formulating objectives
7. Implementing Life Management skills into GED-ABE
8. Problem solving in mathematics
9. Workplace literacy concepts and applications
10. Contextualizing basic skills instruction
11. Using SED recommended achievement tests
12. Classroom management
13. Implementing family literacy concepts into adult literacy classrooms
14. Effective use of commercial materials
15. Vocational English for Speakers of Other Languages (VESOL)
16. Preparing visual material

Low Priority Needs

1. Working with the incarcerated and homeless students
2. Dealing with sexism, racism, and homophobia
3. Action for personal choice
4. Case management
5. HIV education
6. Experiential learning
7. Leadership and supervision skills
8. Multi-cultural awareness
9. Preparation for citizenship
10. Promoting adult's personal control of learning
11. Developing student portfolios
12. Student/client retention
13. Job development and placement
14. Using computers in the classroom
15. Recruiting target populations
16. Grant writing
17. Marketing programs for adults

18. Total Quality management
19. Alcohol/substance abuse
20. Coping with stress
21. Working with the physically disabled

Examination of this list demonstrates an intrinsic flaw of broad-based needs assessments of this type. Topics listed under "Low Priority Needs" are not necessarily unimportant; they simply were not as important to raters in the aggregate as other topics were. They may, however, be critically important to teachers in certain programs. To avoid this misconception, responses must be correlated to demographic data on survey respondents. Also, what a group of teachers as a whole determines to be important or not important may indeed be important; for example, teachers may not be interested in learning more about "promoting adult's personal control of learning," but research tells us that doing so is integral to learning.

The most recent true teacher competency study project we identified was Kentucky's 1993 "Competency Profile of an Adult Basic Skills Instructor." The results were developed through a two-day DACUM session of an "expert" panel of teachers, program coordinators, paraprofessionals, and a volunteer, using a modified brainstorming technique. The chart this group produced is organized into seven main duty areas, with a varying number of subskills within each area, headed by one main competency, and validated by four panels throughout the state, as follows:

An Adult Education and Literacy Instructor in Kentucky ... teaches and facilitates adults in their pursuit of those basic education and life skills required to function in all areas of society and/or the workforce.

1. Promotes ABE programs
   - 1.1 Participates actively in inter-agency council meetings
   - 1.2 Disseminates information through various media
   - 1.3 Utilizes supportive community groups
   - 1.4 Identifies and targets adult students to be recruited
   - 1.5 Plans and implements student recruitment programs
   - 1.6 Plans joint ventures with other public/private agencies
   - 1.7 Utilizes opportunities for public speaking
   - 1.8 Plans recognition ceremonies and activities

2. Assesses, counsels students
   - 2.1 Interviews and collects demographic data
   - 2.2 Helps students identify obtainable short- and long-term goals
   - 2.3 Provides orientation of students to available services offered
   - 2.4 Identifies learning styles
   - 2.5 Administers appropriate tests
   - 2.6. Interprets test results
   - 2.7 Develops Student Educational Plan (SEP)
   - 2.8 Enrolls/places students in appropriate program
   - 2.9 Accommodates students with special learning needs
   - 2.10 Guides students to obtainable goals
   - 2.11 Retests students for measurable gains

2.12 Utilized informal assessment

3. Provides information, personal counseling
   - 3.1 Establishes and maintains confidence of student
   - 3.2 Listens to personal concerns
   - 3.3 Recognizes personal/physical barriers to learning
   - 3.4 Maintains confidence of the student
   - 3.5 Refers students to appropriate agencies
   - 3.6 Encourages students to pursue positive objectives
   - 3.7 Serves as student advocate when necessary
   - 3.8 Makes home visits as necessary

4. Plans and implements instructional programs
   - 4.1 Establishes instructional goals and objectives
   - 4.2 Fosters positive learning environment
   - 4.3 Becomes familiar with materials
   - 4.5 Prepares thematic unit(s) and lesson plans
   - 4.6 Selects appropriate materials and methods to meet Student's Education Plan (SEP)
   - 4.7 Utilizes appropriate technologies
   - 4.8 Provides appropriate life skills and/or vocational skills as needed
   - 4.9 Provides instruction in academic skills, reading, math, social studies, science, writing
   - 4.10 Provides instruction without bias (ethnicity, race, gender, religion, special needs)
   - 4.11 Promotes higher order thinking skills

5. Maintains program accountability
   - 5.1 Adheres to quality indicators
   - 5.2 Complies with state and federal regulations
   - 5.3 Identifies and adheres to program objectives
   - 5.4 Evaluates teaching methodology/strategies and materials

6. Practices professional competency
   - 6.1 Establishes student/teacher respect and confidentiality
   - 6.2 Follows appropriate channels of communication
   - 6.3 Demonstrates adaptability in the work environment
   - 6.4 Models appropriate dress and behaviors
   - 6.6 Participates in professional organizations
   - 6.7 Utilizes professional journals
   - 6.8 Establishes personal accountability standards
   - 6.9 Participates in Individual Growth Plan (IGP)
   - 6.10 Measures personal performance
   - 6.11 Utilizes state resource center
   - 6.12 Builds resource file library
   - 6.13 Conveys and demonstrates an interest in national issues

7. Performs administrative tasks
   - 7.1 Maintains safe and accessible environment
   - 7.2 Manages time well
   - 7.3 Operates within budget
   - 7.4 Orders materials
   - 7.5 Provides supervision to others when appropriate
   - 7.6 Manages record keeping
   - 7.7 Assists in writing RFP/grants
   - 7.8 Utilizes and recruits volunteers

Further, Kentucky lists Skills, Knowledge, and Traits as follows:

Skills

- Assessment
- Vision
- Analyzing
- Listening
- Social
- Motivational
- Lesson Planning
- Questioning
- Leadership
- Organizational
- Ability to approach education nontraditionally
- Time management
- Delegate authority
- Leading groups
- How to help students develop IEP
- Marketing
- Communication
- Ability to take risks
- Computational
- Administrative (management)
- Classroom management

Knowledge

- Laws and regulations
- Proficiency in core subjects not less than but preferably more than a high school graduate
- Community resources
- Good community resource base
- Familiarity with materials
- World of work
- Teaching methodology
- Test instruments
- Working knowledge of ABE programs
- Instructional technology
- Designing classroom atmosphere conducive to learning
- Basic academic knowledge
- Cultural differences
- Understanding of the adult learner

Traits

- Ability to empathize
- Ability to care
- Self-awareness of limitations
- Good judgment
- Patience
- Sense of fairness
- Desire to help others
- Professional curiosity
- Sensitivity
- Desire to learn
- Introspective
- "I'm OK, you're OK" attitude
- Optimistic
- Self-starter
- Idealistic
- Flexible
- Cooperative
- Realistic

Friendly
Tactful
Innovative

One additional note: According to "The Professionalism of the Teacher in Adult Literacy Education" (Shanahan, et al.) the International Reading Association (IRA) has "renewed its interest in establishing a set of standards to guide the professional development of adult literacy educators." The Director of Research at the IRA told us that no such initiative is in process at this writing to her knowledge.

Competencies for ESL Teachers

We located an ERIC Digest ("ESL Teacher Education: ERIC Digest"), which noted the following:

> "TESOL, in an attempt to address concerns of educators, held a conference (1970) to develop guidelines for certification and preparation of ESL teachers in the United States. These guidelines, which are in three parts, define the role of an ESL teacher in an American school, describe the personal qualities and professional competencies the teacher should possess, and describe the features of a professional preparation program designed to fulfill those competencies. They have been used extensively by the states in setting their requirements for certification."

Based on that statement we requested information on teacher competencies from TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) but received only a brochure, "Statement of Core Standards for Language and Professional Preparation Programs." This was not directly relevant to the topic of teacher competencies.

The only competency list we could locate at this time that was directly relevant to teachers of ESL was "Teacher Qualifications and Preparation: Guide for TESOL/US" (Norris, 1972). This may have been the resulting guidelines referred to above. In addition to a curriculum outline for a model teacher education program in teaching ESL, as well as an outline of the role of the ESL teacher, the paper presented the following "Personal Qualities and Professional Competencies and Experience of the English as a Second Language Teacher in American Schools":

> To achieve the objective of his teaching role the teacher of English as a second language in American schools is expected to:
>
> 1. Have personal qualities which contribute to his success as a classroom teacher, insure understanding and respect for his students and their cultural setting, and make him a perceptive and involved member of his community.

2. Demonstrate proficiency in spoken and written English at a level commensurate with his role as a language model. Whether he is a native-language or second-language speaker of English, his command of the language should combine qualities of accuracy and fluency; his experience of it should include a wide acquaintance with writings in it.

3. Have had the experience of learning another language and acquiring a knowledge of its structure; and have a conscious perception of another cultural system. If possible, the language and cultural system should be related to that of the population with which he is to work.

4. Understand the nature of language; the fact of language varieties—social, regional, and functional; the structure and development of the English language systems, and the culture of English-speaking people.

5. Have a knowledge of the process of language acquisition as it concerns first and subsequent language learning and as it varies at different age levels; and understand the effects on language learning of socio-cultural variables in the instructional situation.

6. Have an understanding of the principles of language pedagogy and the demonstrated ability, gained by actual teaching experience, to apply these principles as needed to various classroom situations and instructional materials.

7. Have an understanding of the principles, and ability to apply the techniques and interpret the results of second-language assessment of student progress and proficiency; and ability to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching materials, procedures, and curricula.

8. Have a sophisticated understanding of the factors which contribute to the life styles of various people, and which determine both their uniqueness and their interrelationships in a pluralistic society.

Content of ABLE Teacher Training Programs

A three-part federally funded Pelavin Associates project called "Study of ABE/ESL Instructor Training Approaches" (1991: listed in bibliography separately under Kutner, Sherman, and Tibbetts) surveyed all 50 states and the District of Columbia to discover whether or not each state required any form of teacher certification, as well as the nature and content of existent staff development activities. The following chart lists in order of frequency the content of teacher training programs—items which could alternately be stated in terms of teacher competencies:

Frequency of Content Areas

(Content areas which at least five states reported as important; most states are represented in multiple categories therefore percents do not total 100)

	States	Percent
Curriculum and strategy selection	35	69
Computers/technology in the classroom	23	45
General management (PR, finances, etc.)	23	45
Learning disabled adults	21	41
Workplace literacy	21	41

Math	19	37
Peer observation and coaching	16	31
Managing volunteers	14	27
Adult learners	13	25
Laubach	12	24
Family literacy	11	22
Cultural awareness	11	22
Managing stress/counseling techniques	11	22
Student assessment	11	22
Critical thinking	11	22
Learning styles	10	20
Whole language experience	10	20
Mentoring	5	10
Total states represented in this summary:	51	

(Kutner, et al., 1991)

The Pelavin studies looked at the content of several model teacher training programs being conducted at state and local levels for ABE and ESL teachers. Those findings are briefly summarized here, though they do not all appear to be competency-based.

- **Delaware: Adult Community Education (ACE) Network**

(1990)
Basic reading for adults
Improving student retention
Adults with learning disabilities
Reading comprehension improvement
Integrating reading and writing skills
Integrating basic and life skills
GED preparation
Resources for the adult educator

Summer courses:
Principles of adult basic/adult secondary education
Workplace literacy programs
Utilizing technology in the adult education classroom

Topics are chosen each year based on a combination of teacher interests and "programmatic needs."

Overall, the report observed a "consistent, conscious, conscientious effort to apply adult education principles" in training activities in Delaware.

- **California: ESL Teacher Training Institute**

ESL Institute

Step One:
Workshop for new instructors

Step Two:
Core training module - competency-based education/lesson design module, submit video demonstrating classroom teaching

Step Three:
ESL technique modules; create a lesson plan in a particular technique, submit video demonstrating mastery of this technique, analysis and feedback by the Institute

Step Four
Complete training through annual colloquium

- **Minnesota: Literacy Training Network**

Level A
Orientation/overview: definition of literacy, characteristics of the adult learner, funding sources, opportunities for staff training and development, delivery systems, individual learning plans and contracts, utilization of community resources

Level B
Application of knowledge, skills, and attitudes as they pertain to personal and classroom use: use and purpose of personal inventories, adult learning theories, communication skills, classroom management

Level C
Opportunity for experienced instructor to hone skills: essential learning strategies, computer-assisted instruction, identification of different learning styles and application of appropriate learning strategies, learner-centered assessment in the individual learning plan of each student, sensitivity to cultural diversity, utilization of Bloom's taxonomy to develop critical thinking skills. Also: areas of special interest: content (reading, writing, math), special needs clients, personal growth, supervision (evaluation, data management, team building)

- **New Jersey: Bureau of Program Development, Evaluation, and Training**

ABE:
critical thinking skills (strong emphasis)
employability skills
literacy/low-level readers
math

ESL:
working with individuals who are illiterate in their native language
managing multi-level classrooms
integration the four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
use of real language in the classroom
cross-cultural awareness
cooperative language learning
student-centered activities

Other general:
individual learning styles

family literacy
workplace literacy

- **Massachusetts: System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES)**

(Orientation for ABE, ESL, and GED teachers, counselors, and support staff)

First day:
What is literacy?
Materials
The learner in the community and social network: investigative activities
The big picture: adult education in Massachusetts and beyond

Second day:
The learner within the community: problem posing activities
Techniques and Methods
Lesson planning

Third day:
The learner within the community
Learner-centered classrooms
Connecting to resource network and support systems
How adults learn as individuals
Experience of being an adult educator: realities and ideals

Inservice activities through regional support centers: 1990-91 topics:
Process writing
Methods and materials for basic ESL
Alternative assessment
Teachers as researchers
Counseling skills for teachers
Cultural awareness
Family literacy
What we think we know about dealing with adult learners
Curriculum development
Teaching the dyslexic student
Learning disabilities
Whole language
TPR and drama in the ESL classroom
Acting out: a visual way of writing
Student reading form the new word

- **Florida: Dade County Adult Assessment System for ESOL (DCAASE)**

ESL:
Understanding and utilizing Freirean principles of classroom management
Using the model of teacher as facilitator and learner as an empowered, self-directed contributor to the learning process
Second language acquisition
The role of the affective
Performance expectations of adults (especially pronunciation)
Total Physical Response
multisensory approaches in ESOL
Cooperative learning
Language experience approach
Journal writing

Semantic mapping
Cross-cultural comparison
Holistic evaluation techniques
Immigrant rights and South Florida issues

- **California: Project Read, San Francisco Public Library**

Purposes of training:
To provide tutors with useful information and techniques to be able to teach effectively
To enable tutors to gain a sense of who the students are, and to be able to relate to the students on a peer level
To enable tutors to gain a sense of confidence—a feeling that they can "do this"
To provide tutors with access to resources to support their tutorial work

First session:
Introduction to reading
Word recognition: phonics, sight words, syllabification, structural analysis
Phonics assessment

Second session:
Comprehension questioning/modeling techniques
Comprehension testing

Third session:
Finding materials, simplifying them, readability formula, language experience
Process writing, spelling, vocabulary

Fourth session:
Learning styles, nonstandard English, ESL
Lesson planning, putting it together in the framework of thematic based readings

One tutor trainer characterized her four-session training workshop series as follows:
Reading process (simulating beginning reading)
Problems that learners might have
Different learning styles (case studies)
Characteristics of adult learners
Evaluating reading
Strategies for remediation
Language-based approaches
Process of writing (pre-writing through editing)
Listening/speaking
Benchmarks for speaking
Close/comprehension strategies
Strategies for expository text
Demonstration lesson
Planning the first three weeks

- **New York: City University of New York**

ABE:
Finding appropriate reading materials for students
Portfolio assessment

Both ABE and ESL:
Classroom management (attendance, assigning homework, balancing activities)
Working with students individually
Developing real-life materials

Assessment

ESL:
Teaching multi-level ESL classes
Assessment and evaluation in multi-level classes
Whole class and group activities
Pair work
Literacy development
Language acquisition

According to the Pelavin reports, statewide staff development programs in the states of Washington (Adult Basic and Literacy Educators Network) and California (CASAS) appeared to have a possible competency-based foundation; however, both states responded to our request for further information by informing us that the staff development programs were based on training teachers to instruct students in competency-based education (CBE) programs. They were not competency-based staff development programs.

Concurrent to this literature review, Richard Gacka and Mary Louise Gall of Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit in Edinboro, Pennsylvania, were in the process of writing a core curriculum for adult basic and literacy education teachers. A draft was provided to this project, as follows:

The following courses have varying clock hours and CEUs assigned to them.

Teacher Level I (Beginning)
- Structure of Adult Education Programming
- Testing and Statistics
- Plan Development
- Methods and Materials of Reading
- Methods and Materials of Mathematics
- Methods and Materials of Writing
- Computer Basics
- Content Area Electives (ESL/Literacy/PreGED/GED)

Teacher Level II (Advanced)
- Statistics
- Assessment Methods
- Computer Skills
- Applied Curriculum
- Abnormal Psychology
- Budgeting and Finance
- Content Area Electives (ESL/Literacy/PreGED/GED)

Tutor Level I (Beginning)
- Characteristics of the ABLE Student
- Introduction to Tutoring (approved method)
- Introduction to Planning
- Content Area Electives (ESL/Literacy/PreGED/GED)

Tutor Level II (Advanced)
- Methods and materials of Reading
- Methods and materials of Mathematics

Methods and materials of Writing
Content Area Electives (ESL/Literacy/PreGED/GED)
Introduction to Computer

Administration - Level I (Beginning)
Structure of Adult Education Funding
Characteristics of the ABLE Student
Testing and Statistics
Information Management Systems
Student Plan Development
Guidelines, Standards, and Law
Budget Basics
Interpersonal Skills
Performance Observation and Rating
GED

Administration - Level II (Advanced)
E-mail and Bulletin Boards
Advanced Statistics
Vocational Assessment
Career Assessment
Data Base Design
Advanced Design
Spreadsheets and Data Base Applications
Publicity and Recruitment

The only report of an actual staff development program designed around competencies which we were able to locate was that of the Adult Basic Skills Instructor Training Project, conducted in North Carolina in 1988-90 (Marlowe, 1991). In that state, all adult basic education is delivered through 58 community colleges. The project, designed "to develop a cadre of local basic skills instructor trainers who can effectively help meet the training and development needs of basic skills instructors at each of the community colleges", began with a literature search "to identify and define curriculum domains in basic skills instructor training" and to abstract "competency statements or listings that could be succinctly gleaned from the writing ..." A project advisory committee, comprised of ABE program administrators, instructors, and other adult education specialists, reviewed the "non-redundant compendium of competencies" developed from the search. The project then designed a series of institutes for identified "instructor trainers" which were presented over the next two years.

Of particular interest in the North Carolina study was that competency training was to be based on Kolb's "experiential learning theory," which, briefly stated, suggests that "learning occurs as the individual moves through a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation." Most of the project's instructor training was classroom-based, with some "on-the-job opportunities to use what they had learned". Feedback data from that phase, however, was restricted to whether or

not those opportunities actually came about rather than any test or demonstration of competencies, and we have not seen any report of competency-based staff development plans at the practitioner level in the North Carolina community college delivery system.

The North Carolina report did, however, recommend an:

"... ongoing training program for new and experienced ABE instructors which meets the following objectives:

- development and enhancement of a professional identity among ABE instructors
- development and support of continuing inquiry, learning, and professional growth among ABE instructors
- increased incorporation of applicable research findings into practice
- increased communication among ABE personnel and increased utilization of skills, knowledge, experience, and products developed by ABE personnel since the 1970's."

(Marlowe, 1991)

Volunteer Preservice Training Content

The content of preservice training for volunteer literacy tutors specifically is clearly outlined in training materials published by Laubach Literacy International and Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), the two largest sources of such materials, as well as by other volunteer associations and local programs. One study summarized recommended content of a preservice training program for volunteers (Borden, 1984) as follows:

- An overview of the program and the specific area for which the volunteer is being trained.
- An orientation to the adult learner; how her/his learning may differ from younger learners.
- A discussion of clearly stated program objectives to be met through volunteer assistance.
- Demonstrations and practice of specific activities to be carried out by volunteers in meeting those objectives.
- An introduction to materials volunteers will use; a chance to practice using same.
- Suggestions for games and ideas volunteers can use to enhance adult learning.
- Clarification of the volunteer's role in relation to professional staff.
- Adequate time for discussion.

Note that a number of the items on the above list correspond to the competencies for paid staff indicated by other studies cited in this report.

ESL Teacher Training Content

Content of training programs for teachers of speakers of other languages, or ESL (English as a second language) teachers, has been addressed for over 20 years, though not specifically for teachers of *adult* ESL students. Indeed, most states currently have an ESL endorsement for teaching certificates, though any sort of certification is infrequently required for teachers of adult ESL.

"From 1976 to 1980 the number of states offering some kind of certification in ESL increased almost five-fold, from 4 to 19. At present, 33 states and the District of Columbia have certification or endorsement and two states have pending certification legislation.

... "The fact that most of the programs are graduate programs also accounts for the number of states that have endorsements for ESL rather than full certification since teachers often get their additional training in ESL adding endorsements to previous basic certification. Many school systems provide inservice training in ESL; moreover, the TESOL organization, through its affiliates and their conferences which offer Continuing Education Units, has taken the responsibility for a great deal of inservice ESL teacher education." (Kreidler, 1987)

Assessing Validity of Training Content

Developing a list of competencies accomplishes:

"... only one of the three basic requirements of a complete competency based education program, i.e., the identification of terminal competencies of adult educators. Yet to be developed, in order to be fully operational, are the instructional strategies or enabling activities for each of these competencies and the assessment techniques to determine the level of accomplishment.

... "An alternative direction, and one not extensively described by proponants [sic] of CBE, is the use of these [competency] lists as an individual diagnostic instrument or checklist for adult learners. In this approach a form is developed enabling individuals to make a self-assessment based on the listed competencies with a current 'status assessment' of both personal and professional goals. This is being used in some courses in adult education and the numbers are increasing. It is the basic approach used by Knowles in his text on self-directed learning." (Smith, 1976)

A course on "The Adult Learner" employed such an approach.

"A list was developed and each person was asked to take a self-assessment, indicating those competencies of high importance but presently at a low level of accomplishment. 'Contracts' were then developed, based on the competencies selected, in which the persons identified specific activities they would be engaged in for the duration of the course. This was found to be an engaging, fulfilling and personally and professionally rewarding experience for most of the students." (Smith, 1976)

We also briefly looked at what existent ABLE training programs were doing to follow up training activities. Data on this stage of implementing competency-based staff development was scant.

According to the Pelavin study, following training workshops:

"Local programs [in Washington] must provide an action plan for the implementation of the competencies as a requirement for receiving 353 funds. Each year, an evaluation team, which includes the ABLE Network director, a local program director, a local instructor and an out-of-state ABE director, evaluates six to eight of the programs. The evaluation provides the opportunity to see how the training is implemented. The results of this year's [1991] evaluation show that the Core Competencies are not being implemented to the degree anticipated and that a more proactive stance will need to be taken to ensure that they are implemented. As part of that stance, the director is considering introducing more training at the local level." (Sherman, et al., 1991)

According to direct communication with the state of Washington, the Core Competencies referred to above are for students, not staff.

B. Interpretation

Factors Complicating Staff Development

The literature indirectly reveals that any formalized staff development program for adult educators needs to be tempered with considerations of several underlying factors, limitations, and cautions, including the following points:

- **Historical changes in training content**

  "The focus of instructor training programs shifts from time to time depending upon perceived training needs, philosophies and policy directions articulated by funding sources such as state departments of education, and perceptions of shifts in the client population. Over the past decade [since1981] such shifts have included: 1) an emphasis on ABE and ESL recruitment and retention; 2) a focus on ESL adult education to help instructors meet the needs of non-literate and pre-literate ESL learners; and 3) an interest in volunteer training efforts." (Tibbetts, et al., 1991)

- **Philosophic position of competency-based education**

  ... "competency-based education raises the philosophic debate between the behaviorist and the humanist. The latter fear the trivial 'laundry list' of competencies may preclude the search for other types of competencies that defy precise measurement. However, ... CBE, in fact, may be a viable means for such competencies being sensitive to humanistic responsibilities." (Smith, 1976)

- **Lack of certification requirements**

  "Unlike elementary and secondary education in which teachers must meet state certification requirements before they are allowed into the classroom, few states have specific certification requirements for adult education teachers. When states require adult education teachers to be certified, it generally consists of certification in elementary or secondary education [Cope, 1984]. Although state certification requirements for adult education teachers would not ensure a well-prepared teaching force, the absence of such requirements probably reduces demand for training services, especially since adult education programs are typically underfunded and employ part-time teachers who generally are not reimbursed for time spent at training." (Tibbetts, et al., 1991)

- **High percentage of part-time and volunteer instructors**

"Instructional staff at ABE and ESL programs typically consist of part-time teachers and volunteers. ABE and ESL teachers are generally characterized as highly transitory, often isolated, and frequently elementary or secondary teachers working part-time in adult education programs. Volunteer instructors in ABE and ESL programs are typically employed full-time in other positions and although generally well-educated, are not professional educators or experienced in adult education." (Tibbetts, et al., 1991)

Estimates place the number of part-time instructors, including volunteers, at over 90 percent nationwide. Part-time staff are typically paid an hourly wage and receive no benefits. Further, the percentage of volunteers alone is estimated at between 25 percent and 75 percent nationwide (Tibbetts, et al., 1991). Latest Pennsylvania Department of Education figures indicate that the staff ratio in adult basic and literacy education programs in this state to be 76 percent volunteer, 19 percent paid part-time, and 6 percent full-time.

The potential implications of these figures on staff development efforts are many:

"... studies abound calling for increased staff development ... Others call for setting standards for practice, requiring participation in preservice and inservice activities. All of these are necessary; however, under the current system, will part-time teachers, and all that implies, be willing to accept such conditions? Can change be forced upon them when there is too often no support available once they return to the classroom? What is the payoff for them and can ABE supply it? ... by ignoring what is known to be true about teacher training and allowing the ratio of full-time to part-time employees and volunteers to get so out of hand, ABE is fragmented and dysfunctional. Finally, the field must address the most difficult question of all: quantity of students versus quality of service provided." (Leahy, 1991)

- **Lack of a knowledge base**

Shanahan et al. write that: "There appears to be a core of information and skills that would benefit adult literacy educators, although there clearly is a need for the availability of even more research." (The irony here is that: "Those who recommend that professionalization should wait until we have a greater knowledge base could be unintentionally limiting its development" (ibid.).)

The paper continues:

"Even when discussions assume that an appropriate and adequate knowledge base exists, there can be serious disagreements over related issues of authority. Who determines which knowledge is relevant to adult literacy? The history of such disputes in other fields suggests that there is no simple answer. Usually such standards do not have a single source, but emerge from some combination of sources, including members of the profession through their professional organizations, individual scholars, and state regulators. Although it is common in those professions funded directly by tax dollars, that governmental regulation takes a primary role in standard setting, the history of such efforts suggests much wider participation—and even the adoption of extant professional standards." (Shanahan, et al., 1994)

- **The absence of an empirical association between documented teacher quality and student learning outcomes.**

This question has not been specifically answered for ABE, where students attend mostly on a voluntary basis [and where accountability for outcomes has historically been nearly nonexistent], but it is answered in the affirmative for K-12 (Shanahan, et al., 1994).

In making the case for practitioner inquiry as staff development, Lytle et al. write:

> "The adult literacy workforce is often portrayed as composed of part-time teachers or volunteers who have full-time jobs in other fields and little background in education.[1] Although acknowledged to be highly dedicated, both groups are presumed to have little formal preparation in literacy education for adult learners. Some make a causal link between this lack of prior training and problems of low retention and performance of adult learners and suggest that in order to improve program outcomes, teachers, volunteers, and administrators alike will need to be more qualified." [2] [Foster]

Conclusions

The Pelavin study summed up the topic of what should be included in a training program for adult educators:

> "... while there may be a lack of a single, unified theory of adult learning to serve as the agreed-upon basis of adult instructor training, this is not to say that there are not viable theories to guide practitioners and trainers of practitioners. On the contrary, there appears to be a considerable range of—sometimes competing—alternative constructs to guide the adult educator. The difficulty for trainers and practitioners lies in understanding and drawing from a broad range of social science disciplines to integrate the diverse theories that have bearing upon adult education.
>
> "The research literature, however, consistently indicates that training services for adult education teachers and volunteer instructors should be responsive to the adult education workforce's lack of experience with teaching adults and should include instruction that identifies adult learning types and strategies which are different from those of children. Furthermore, training programs for adult educators need to help practitioners develop sensitivity to, as well as the ability to deal with, the needs of adults with learning deficiencies [Kazemek, 1988; Harman, 1985]." (Tibbetts, et al., 1991)

Though references are not clearly cited in the Pelavin summary, we here summarize the other points as reported in that document. Note that topics are divided into the categories of ABE teachers and ESL teachers:

Knowledge of subject-matter content

ABE

- reading, writing, mathematics, and language-acquisition [ESL] skills
- helping students derive meaning and utility from subject matter and to apply these skills to real-life situations
- the skills necessary to teach higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving skills within the basic skills areas

ESL

"The absence of a coherent and research-based set of curricula and instructional approaches impedes the training for teachers of nonliterate and preliterate ESL students. Research in this area is fragmentary and contradictory. For example, there is no agreement on whether reading and writing should be taught separately or together, or on whether reading should precede writing. The only idea which has gained acceptance is that oral skills should be developed prior to and as the basis for reading and writing."

Knowledge of pedagogical [andragogical] skills

ABE

"Adult education teachers and volunteer instructors should be knowledgeable in certain pedagogical areas that are related specifically to adult learners. Theories of adult learning acknowledge that there are inherent differences between the adult and child learner. For example, adults are more self-directed than children, have a reservoir of experience, and want learning to be problem-centered. Teachers must see these differences and structure a learning environment that meets the needs of adult learning.

"Adult education students often possess special learning needs and have failed in traditional school settings because of undiagnosed learning disabilities. It is important, therefore, for teachers and volunteer instructors to be comfortable with diagnosing learning needs, including identifying students with learning disabilities. In addition, adult education teachers and volunteer instructors should be sensitive to cultural differences, ensure a positive learning environment, provide students with opportunities for success and offer immediate and continuous feedback to students."

ESL

"ESL teachers should be familiar with the different approaches for second language teaching, especially for the four major approaches use by practitioners over the past several decades. These are: the grammar translation approach, the audiolingual approach, the communication approach, and the humanistic/psychological approach. Specific instructional methods, with which adult education teachers should be familiar, are often associated with each of these approaches."

Developing competency-based standards for ABLE practitioners is clearly one way to address their training needs. Overall, however, although all of the competency lists we examined contain numerous items that would be of value to current adult basic and literacy education practice, all of the lists fall far short of current needs of the profession. Mocker competencies such as "has knowledge of the theory and practice of teaching in adult education" seem vague and difficult to reliably demonstrate. References to, for instance, "modern math" and "learning laboratory" as well as to phonics instruction as a discrete competency reflect outdated perspectives. Some competencies, e.g. those regarding

personal appearance and classroom cleanliness, stray beyond the scope of Pennsylvania's staff development priorities. And in total, the Mocker lists are much too long and unwieldy unless items can be classified and organized into manageable clusters. Even in doing so, however, the need for new items would persist.

Some of the more recent lists, such as that developed by Nunes & Halloran in 1987, are considerably more current and manageable but still would probably not adequately meet Pennsylvania's current staff development needs.

Nevertheless, in combination with contemporary perspectives, tempered with item composition that is general, yet substantial enough to meet specific practitioner needs *and* stand the test of time, the existing competency lists we examined, along with topics culled from the content of existing training programs, would help form the basis for development of a new list. The four Mocker classifications (Curriculum, ABE Learner, Scope and Goal of Adult Education, and Instructional Process) and similar categories delineated in other competency studies would be useful for setting up new classifications that reflect current needs.

C. Recommendations

In light of the content and shortcomings of existing staff competency lists, as well as the scarcity of application of such lists to actual staff development programs, we believe it is necessary to rethink, reclassify, revise, rewrite, and revalidate competencies that would better address our state's needs and the realities of providing the staff development services required to fulfill the competencies. Increased emphases on "whole" curricula, assessment, and continuing professional development, for example, need to be reflected in any list of staff competencies Pennsylvania chooses to develop. In addition, newer models of learning should be taken into consideration: rather than be *teachable*, as in a deficit model, every competency should be *demonstrable* in some form: through pre-service or in-service training workshops followed by application—through practitioner inquiry, through action research, through reading and reporting, through journaling of actual practice, etc. Also, items should be general enough so that a practitioner serving any type of adult basic education or literacy learner, in any content area, in any type of program, and in any instructional venue could interpret and address the competencies according to his or her specific professional circumstances.

Therefore, beginning on the next page, we present a list of competencies for adult basic and literacy educators, particularly teachers, based on earlier lists developed by

Mocker, McClellan, Smith, Burrichter & Gardner, Stafford, Fellenz, Nunes & Halloran, Leahy, the New York State Literacy Resource Center, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky Department for Adult Education and Literacy, and with additional ideas derived from recent needs assessments conducted by Pennsylvania's Regional Staff Development Centers (RSDCs) and general awareness of current literature in the field and current professional practice. Note that all four areas incorporate multicultural awareness and professional development. We offer this as a preliminary outline of staff competencies as they might be approached from a current-day perspective. Following the list we offer options for refining and validating it, as well as for putting it into practice.

Competencies for Adult Basic and Literacy Education Staff in Pennsylvania

Phase I List

Adult Basic and Literacy Education practitioners in Pennsylvania will be able to demonstrate knowledge and successful application (as appropriate and with specific applications defined by individual participants) of a set of competencies in each of four general areas, as follows:

- **Adult Learning in the Context of the Educational Program and the Community**

Knowledge and application of:

national and state adult competency levels
scope and goals of adult education in general
scope and goals of state adult education program
scope and goals of local program
the position and role of adult education in the context of contemporary society
organizational structure of the education service provider
social structure and characteristics of the community
principles of learning as they relate to adults
how adult learners differ from children
identification of individual learners' perceptual/learning style
recognition of strengths and limitations of individual learners
sources and effects of low self-esteem on adult learning
psycho-social barriers of special populations
adult learner motivation
effective student recruitment practices
elements of adult learner retention, i.e. attendance
elements of adult learner skills retention
cultural and social influences
modeling lifelong learning

- **Assessment of Learner Needs and of Progress Toward Goals**

Knowledge and application of:

intake process
interviewing
goal setting
diagnosis of individual learning needs
types and uses of standardized tests
specific standardized tests: purposes, content, selection, administration, scoring, interpretation, application
detection and consideration of cultural bias in measurement instruments
informal assessment methods (portfolio, etc.)
assessment data analysis
placement in appropriate program/level/curriculum
individualized education plan
methods for tracking learner progress toward goals
construction and application of periodic measurement tools
learner self-assessment
mechanisms for providing performance feedback to learners
teacher-counseling functions
counseling and legal responsibilities related to adult learners' personal problems (substance/physical abuse, etc.)
systems for referring clients to appropriate community services
conflict management
documentation and reporting of assessment data
collecting exit data
follow-up of exited students

- **Curriculum and Materials in Content Areas**

Knowledge and application of:

current thinking in literacy/numeracy/other content areas
components/topics/characteristics of content area
whole curriculum/cross-curriculum design
matching student goals with program content
curriculum in the social context
lesson preparation/planning based on learner needs
evaluation of commercially published instructional materials
selection of instructionally and culturally appropriate instructional materials
creating/adapting instructional materials
educational applications of technology
sequence of presentation/branching/expansion
integration of curriculum content with real-life needs
incorporation of critical thinking and problem solving into content
collaboration with program colleagues in curriculum development

- **Instructional Process and Practice**

Knowledge and application of:

learning from other practitioners
effective and mutually respectful interpersonal communication
teacher-learner rapport
organizing and managing a learning environment for adults
dynamics and functions of individual and group instruction
collaborative learning groups
sensitivity to a multicultural clientele in a learning context
accommodating a multi-level classroom
learner involvement in education process
development of learner independence
motivation and encouragement
use of delivery systems/methodology appropriate to content and clientele
use of flexible strategies appropriate to learner and need (including special needs)
"teachable moments"
appropriate pacing and timing
incorporation of learner self-esteem and empowerment strategies into teaching methodology
use of small steps and positive reinforcement of accomplishments
contingency planning
ability to deal with behavior problems
self-assessment of effectiveness
use of original research/practitioner inquiry to improve practice (also applicable to demonstration of other competencies)
development of a unique working teaching style
self-directed openness to innovation
use of aides, tutors

A Validation Process

Having completed **Phase 1**, this review of the literature and production of a proposed starting list of competencies, the next steps in implementing a competency-based staff development program in Pennsylvania are to complete the following phases:

Phase 2 Produce a list of competencies as refined from the Phase 1 list.

Phase 3 Design a statewide competency-based staff development program.

Phase 4 Implement a statewide competency-based staff development program.

Phases 2 could be completed in various ways:

1. Conduct a broad, formal, Delphi-type survey of ABLE practitioners by to prioritize, add to, and possibly classify a scrambled version of the Phase I competency list or a Mocker-type list to produce a Phase 2 list. Collect demographic detail (employment status/number of hours worked per week, number of years of experience in ABLE; other past or concurrent teaching experience; area of concentration: literacy, ABE, GED, ESL, workplace, family literacy, etc.) through the survey instrument and correlate that data to the Phase 2 competency list produced through the survey.

2. Assemble a small "expert" panel of ABLE practitioners to rephrase, refine, and add to the Phase I list to produce a Phase 2 list, based on the assumption that the legwork has already been done here and elsewhere.

3. Assign a small group of ABLE staff development specialists, including professors of adult education and workshop facilitators, to produce demonstration and evaluation measures for the Phase 2 competency list produced through #1 or #2.

4. Have the same "expert" panel both refine the Phase 1 list, as in #2 above, and suggest demonstration and evaluation measures for the Phase 2 list, as in #3.

5. Employ an "expert" panel to refine the Phase 1 list but delegate determination of all demonstration and evaluation measures of the Phase 2 list to the regional level or to the consensus of individual ABLE practitioner/mentor teams.

Regardless of the approach taken, this validation process will not be a "needs assessment," as the Pennsylvania Regional Staff Development Centers conduct. Instead, the process would aim to develop *competencies* rather than merely identify *topics*.

A Competency-Based Staff Development Plan

The purpose of defining ABLE staff competencies is to design a staff development program around them. We recommend development of a general training plan based on the set of competencies produced through refinement of our proposed list. Based on this list, along with recommendations for competency implementation, such as those of Smith (1976) and Marlowe (1991), and field-based practitioner inquiry as described by Lytle et al. (1993), individual teachers could demonstrate competencies beginning from varying levels of experience and applying to virtually any of the many areas encompassed within adult basic and literacy education, including literacy tutoring, ABE, GED preparation, and ESL, as well as specialized areas such as workplace and family literacy.

One workable approach would be to offer an adult basic and literacy education practitioner certificate, which would document a practitioner's demonstration of key competencies. As differentiated from the new Graduate Certificate in Adult Literacy Education being offered by Penn State University, this plan would provide a core curriculum based on competencies classified into four modules:

- **Adult Learning** in the Context of the Educational Program and the Community
- **Assessment** of Learner Needs and of Progress Toward Goals
- **Curriculum and Materials** in Content Areas
- **Instructional Process** and Practice

For each module, practitioners would pursue a process akin to Kolb's experiential learning theory, described in Marlowe (1991): "a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation", along with a reporting phase.

The process might begin with attendance at an intensive, "hands-on" seminar of one or two days, led by trained master teachers or other experts and delivered at the most convenient possible location, through Pennsylvania's nine Regional Staff Development Centers. Each such session would provide an overview of one of the four modules, outlining content and competencies and discussing ways of demonstrating the competencies in the field.

The next phase would be a field practicum. Through independently designed means and/or based on documentation procedures predefined by an expert panel, the purpose of the practicum phase would be to:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the concept by reporting on in-service experience, reading, inquiry, or research.
- Demonstrate successful application of the competency in actual practice.

Demonstration of competencies could take a variety of forms. It could consist of mentored action research; individual or group practitioner inquiry; accessing and use of practice-related professional resources; attendance at professional seminars, conferences, events; and/or journaling of readings and experiences, all specific to the individual's professional practice. RSDC coordinators or master teachers of some type could assist practitioners in self-direction of the field practicum phase.

Upon self-assessed completion of each module, the practitioner would submit a portfolio demonstrating achievement of the set of competencies. The portfolio would be reviewed by an expert panel, at either the regional or the state level.

A somewhat more formal approach would be to offer Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for workshop/seminar attendance and completion of individual competencies or full modules. A designated number of accumulated CEUs in adult basic and literacy education would earn the certificate.

In addition to the four general modules, specific modules could be designed for program administrators, counselors, technology specialists, and other non-instructional fields.

Upon completion of the four modules, as well as any optional modules, the practitioner would be awarded the adult basic and literacy education certificate, which would at the very least intrinsically elevate the individual's professionalism and, hopefully, place the practitioner in a formally or informally preferential position for hiring, promotion, or pay increases. All ABLE practitioners in Pennsylvania should be strongly encouraged to work toward the certificate and be compensated for the time they spend attending seminars. Those not seeking the certificate would be encouraged to at least attend the seminars if not follow through with the field practicum component. Ideally, some form of refresher coursework should be offered in the future as well, or practitioners should be formally encouraged to update their certificate at regular intervals by participating in a new round of seminars and practicums.

Implementing this plan would involve a "paradigm shift" in staff development delivery in this state. Due to the current state of adult basic and literacy education in Pennsylvania, participation in the competency-based ABLE practitioner certificate program would need to be optional, though it would be encouraged through ongoing publicity and support, both financial and academic. However, RSDCs would replace their needs-assessment-based workshops with the introductory seminars and with brokering of research, inquiry, and mentoring functions involved in the field practicum phase. The RSDCs could continue offering workshops addressing specific topics but primarily in support of teachers involved in completing competency modules. Training plans for teachers of adult

ESL should probably adhere to TESOL standards in addition to the general areas related to the teaching of adults.

ABLE practitioners with more experience and more working hours would be the most likely candidates for a staff development program based entirely on an inquiry model. However, regardless of level of adult education experience, the training plan should not be limited to the deficit model of staff development, in which practitioners are viewed as being in need of knowledge which will be taught to them. Rather, each practitioner's existing knowledge base should be recognized and developed in relation to individual practice needs. Teachers would be provided with a strong support system, such as the ALPIP model in Philadelphia, for designing their own research to answer the real questions that arise in the context of their own teaching practice. Thus, the knowledge base of the entire field is enhanced. On a pragmatic level, the use of well-planned communication, such as Internet access and an online computerized network, would enable teacher-researchers to conveniently tap into existing research literature and coordinate their inquiry efforts among one other. Such communication would also help resolve the feeling of isolation that many ABLE instructors report as being a significant concern (Lytle et al., 1992).

For new teachers, RSDCs or local programs need to offer, as standard procedure, a pre-service orientation workshop, along the lines of the SABES plan in Massachusetts or Northwest Tri-County IU#5's Teacher Level I curriculum plan. New teachers could potentially apply some content of the orientation workshop to work on the competency-based ABLE practitioner certificate.

Further work needs to be done on the design and structure of the intensive seminars, i.e. to discover what curricula exist and are available for turnkey application or adaptation, whether such curricula are appropriate for this state's needs, which competencies represent the highest priorities, and who is qualified or will be trained to lead regional seminars, mentor field practicum work such as action research and practitioner inquiry projects, and evaluate portfolios. ■

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